



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at the Administrative Office Building, located at 5841 Brookshire Blvd., Charlotte NC on April 12, 2016 at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES April 12, 2016

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair
 Tristan McMannis, Exec. Secretary
 Mary Foxx Johnson
 Doug Burnett
 Ed Barnhart
 Aubin Guinness
 Heidi Pruess
 Brian Cox
 Sterling Martin, Jr.
 Tony Arreaza
 Jim Garges
 Michael Kirschman

PRC Absent:

Abe Early
South Region 3 - Vacant

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

PRESENTATIONS:

Representatives from Pappas Properties gave a presentation on the Charlotte Regional Realtor Association (CRRA) Property Redevelopment and Public Infrastructure Improvements adjacent to Pearle Street Park. The development will include new CRRA offices, residential and retail, 8 level parking decks, mixed use retail/hotel/residential and an office building. The development will include the extension of Pearle Street Park which will cut out a small portion of the park. It was proposed that that Pappas Properties would purchase this remnant from Park and Recreation and the proceeds go towards improvements to Pearle Street Park. In addition, a land swap was proposed to increase the size of Pearle Street Park between Park and Recreation, Baxter Street

Park and the Charlotte Housing Authority. (**Note:** This PowerPoint presentation is contained in the PRC Minutes Binder, April 12, 2016, item **4a**, housed in the Director's office and can be viewed here: [CRRRA Property Redevelopment](#).)

Much discussion followed the presentation between the Park and Recreation Commission, staff, the developers and representatives from the Charlotte Junior Soccer League and Myers Park Trinity Baseball League as well as other interested parties. Discussion followed and included the following:

- Based on current zoning for the redevelopment site, there will be a 100' height limit in the development
- Increased greenway connections through Pearle Street Park towards uptown as part of the infrastructure improvements.
- Public infrastructure improvements constructed and funded by Pappas Properties and reimbursed via a proposed tax increment grant (maximum payout period of 10 years)
- A major concern revolved around parking for the Park.
 - Visitors to the park will no longer be able to park in the existing lot on CRRRA property, and the existing parking areas inside the park from the old Midtown Sundries building, which is located in flood plain, will be demolished as part of the planned improvements.
 - Plans are being considered for limited new parking inside the park
 - Public parking will not be allowed in the parking deck of the new development
 - Soccer play will have to be limited to match the available parking.
 - Park and Recreation cannot have planned activities in a park that would over impact the streets and neighbors of that park and cause poor customer experience due to parking issues.
 - Parking for park patrons in the new development's parking deck has not been considered. 150 plus cars using that deck to attend a soccer game would present a serious problem.
 - Parking is not provided by surrounding development for other urban parks such as Romare and 1st Ward, however paid parking is available.
 - The general consensus from PRC is that parking will have to be addressed
- The land swap with the CHA must go through Federal approval and BOCC approval. Money from the land swap and sale of the land remnant will fund approximately half the cost of improvements to Pearle Street Park, the remainder will be requested in the FY18 budget.
- A greenway connection through the park is considered part of the infrastructure improvements and will be paid for through the TIG.
- The plan shown today of the Pearle Street Park extension alignment is the least invasive of all plans to the park.
- Multiple Commission members and representatives from the Charlotte Junior Soccer League and Myers Park Trinity Baseball League expressed concern that developers can dictate uses of a public park.
- Multiple Commission members and representatives from the Charlotte Junior Soccer League and Myers Park Trinity Baseball League expressed concern that the current users of Pearle Street Park won't be able to continue using the park at the same level or need to move to another location.

Next Steps: Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, shared the current Pearle Street Park plan, which will be reviewed by the users at a separate meeting to tweak the design. It will then go before the Central Advisory Council for endorsement, back to the PRC in May for endorsement and then on to the BOCC. The plan may also go before the Economic Development Committee

once again before going on to the BOCC. Many discussions will be going on simultaneously with the Charlotte Housing Authority, Pappas Properties, The Economic Development Committee, City of Charlotte Zoning and the BOCC as a final park plan is reached.

Reverter Clause – Pearle Street Park: Director Garges also shared that because of the remnant portion of Pearle Street Park, which will be cut off from the park with the Pearle Street Parkway extension and purchased by Pappas Properties, it is important to know that when this park property was sold by the Thompson Children’s Home Arch Diocese to the Park and Recreation Department for \$2,500, it included a reverter clause saying that if for any reason the property was no longer being used as a park the church could buy back the property for the original selling price. This will have to be addressed.

Park Users: Primary users of Pearle Street Park were present and spoke regarding their concerns:

Rich Little and Kip Kiser – Myers Park Trinity Little League and Debbie Wallace – Charlotte Jr. Soccer: Have been users of Pearle Street Park for over 25 years and have maintained and made significant improvements to the park. Their primary concerns with the proposed Pappas Development and the Pearle Street Park plan and other notes of interest are:

- Preserving the park
- Adequate and available parking
- Green space in the uptown area
- Addressing the reverter clause
- Preventing problems now for future users of Pearle Street
- Preserving a space for kids to play
- Alternate fields to move current soccer and baseball practice and games if use becomes limited at Pearle Street. Neighborhood parks that have ball fields are against use by MPTLL and CJS.
- Charlotte Jr. Soccer has invested \$120,000 in turf over the past 20 years and the two organizations together have invested \$3 million in capital improvements
- Have in the past and continue to work on improving the parking
- Saturday soccer: 400 players throughout the day, utilizing 80 to 100 parking spaces
- MPTLL would potentially consider making a financial investment towards parking

Greenway Master Plan Update – Cross Charlotte Trail

Gwen Cook, Greenway Planner, shared proposed changes to the 2015 Greenway Master Plan to accommodate and better align with the Cross Charlotte Trail. Changes are proposed north of uptown and down south in the Pineville area. These changes were presented and endorsed by the Greenway Advisory Council on April 11, 2016. (**NOTE:** This presentation is contained in the PRC Minutes Binder, April 12, 2016, item **4b** housed in the Director’s office and can be view here: [2015 Greenway Master Plan Update](#).)

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to recommend approval of the revisions as presented to the 2015 Park and Recreation Greenway Master Plan to accommodate the alignment of the Cross Charlotte Trail which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

Appointments – Advisory Councils –Applicants

Aquatics: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Cox to appoint **Mimi Goudes** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2016 on the Aquatic Advisory Council, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

Central: Motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to appoint **Molly Carroll** to a first full term on the Central Advisory Council, expiring 6/2019, which was seconded by Commissioner Guinness and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Bryant advised the Board of the Regional Cooperative Extension meeting on April 29 in Stanley County.

Commissioner Johnson reminded the Board that the Central Advisory Council would be hearing the Pearle Street Park presentation on Monday, April 18 at 6 p.m. at the Mahlon Adams Pavilion.

Director's Report

Director Garges reported on the following:

Waymer Center: Funding for the Waymer Center renovations has been approved by the BOCC. Staff will be meeting with residents to go through the development plan with construction to begin in approximately 21 months if not sooner. Renovations include a new electrical system, roof, open air pavilion, parking lot improvements, picnic tables and grills.

Open Streets: The Board was reminded of the Open Streets 704 event set for May 1. This event, made possible by a Knight Grant, will close a stretch of streets from the NoDa area to Memorial Stadium on May 1 from 12 noon to 4 p.m. for the public to use for biking, walking, running and other planned programming and activities.

Budget FY17: Director Garges reminded the Board of the upcoming Budget Public Hearing on June 2 and encouraged them to sign up and speak as a group to advocate before the BOCC for the Department's FY17 budget request. The following information and suggestions were shared:

- Reminded the PRC to invite members of their advisory councils to attend the June 2 Budget Public Hearing
- Suggested that each PRC speak with their assigned BOCC member in advance of the public hearing
- The budget asks for ONA is critical in order to have adequate funds to operate the opening of new Park and Recreation facilities. Anything less than requested equates to a cut for the Department
- The County Manager will be recommending that the Department receive \$4 million per year to address deferred maintenance
- Budget ask of \$150,000 for Sr. Center operations previously funded by United Way
- The amount of funding available to disperse among all Departments by the County Manager is \$12 million
- Each Department will be advised of the recommend budget in advance of being presented by the County Manager to the BOCC
- The Department cannot add anything to the budget, but the PRC can make budget request to the BOCC prior to the public hearing
- Items that the Department did not include in their budget asks this year: marketing, outdoor environment educators, outdoor recreation staff, adequate equipment funding
- Adequate staffing and park operating budget have a tremendous impact on reducing deferred maintenance

- There is a deferred maintenance funding bucket but to stay out of the deferred maintenance cycle, the operating budget needs to include \$3 to \$3.5 million annually for maintenance

PRC Request for Term Extension: The PRC were provided a copy of a “draft” request to the BOCC asking that Commissioners Elaine Powell, Kendel Bryant and Doug Burnett be appointed to an additional 3-year term on the Park and Recreation Commission. Positive discussion followed in support of this special request.

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve a request to the Board of County Commissioners for an additional 3-year PRC term for Commissioners Elaine Powell, Kendel Bryant and Doug Burnett, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

Director Garges suggested that the PRC individually advocate to their assigned BOCC member in support of this upcoming request at the May 17 BOCC meeting.

PRC Chair Report

PRC Retreat Follow-up: Chair Elaine Powell shared the results of a recent PRC retreat follow-up meeting on April 8, 2016. The notes from this meeting can be viewed here: [PRC Retreat Follow-up Notes of April 8, 2016](#).

Discussion followed and included:

- Park and Recreation Commissioners have varying amounts of time and energy to devote to the Commission. There should always be a place for those who are purely interested in advocacy.
- Important for the PRC to understand the Department’s budget needs early in the budget process in order to be better advocates.
- PRC encouraged staff to invite PRC to meetings as appropriate.
- The need was expressed by PRC to better understand the Department’s contract process. Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman, agreed to provide an educational presentation on this topic to the PRC

Brooklyn Village: Chair Elaine Powell provided each commissioner with a copy of a “draft” letter expressing the PRC’s advocacy and expectations for a park in the Brooklyn Village development and asked for a motion by the PRC to give permission to the PRC Executive Team to send a finalized letter to the BOCC by April 19th.

Director Garges shared that he felt it was important that the Brooklyn Village development include a park that would be comparable to Romare Bearden, 1st Ward and 4th Ward Parks and would be accepted by the PRC, the 2nd Ward Alumni Association and all those familiar with the history of Brooklyn Village. In addition, Director Garges stressed the importance of making sure that adequate public parking is included for the park users as well as the many events at the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center.

Motion was made by Commissioner Cox to give permission to the PRC Executive Team to draft and send a letter with regard to the expectations of the PRC for a park in the Brooklyn Village development to the BOCC by April 19, 2016, which was seconded by Commissioner Barnhart. Discussion followed:

- Commissioner Cox felt that it is important to express to the BOCC that this decision, for the Brooklyn Village Park, is a *forever* decision.
- Remember that we are also the Park and Recreation Department for the City of Charlotte.
- There is no greater task currently before the PRC than advocacy for the right park in the Brooklyn Village development.
- Commissioner Barnhart said the letter should include a definite number in terms of acres for the park and that the park is contiguous. Adequate parking must be addressed.
- Important for a PRC representative to be at all public meetings regarding Brooklyn Village.

The **motion** carried unanimously.

Organizational Chart – Park and Recreation: Deputy Director Michael Kirschman provided the PRC with an organization chart of the upper tiers of Department management. This will provide PRC with an idea of who they need to call with any particular question. Michael encouraged PRC reach out to staff or to call him or Director Garges anytime with questions or concerns or to set up a breakfast or lunch meeting.

Consent Items

Motion was made by Commissioner Bryant to approve all consent items, including the PRC Minutes for March 8, 2016, which was seconded by Commissioner McMannis and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

Waste Management Board Meeting - Park Recycling Centers: Commissioner Bryant spoke to the recent recommendation by Waste Management staff to remove the 3 remaining recycling centers located in our parks because of the poor return on the investment. There was considerable concern that this decision was made without any discussion with Park and Recreation staff or the Park and Recreation Commission. Commissioner Bryant reminded all of the importance of environment stewardship and asked that PRC attend an upcoming Waste Management Board meeting on April 19 to support keeping recycling centers in our parks.

Deputy Director Michael Kirschman shared that while having recycling centers in our parks are not without challenges to staff, open discussion for improvements is encouraged.

Advisory Council Tele-Conferencing: Commissioner Pruess was asked by the Athletics Advisory Council to present to the Park and Recreation Commission the possibility of using teleconferencing as an option for attendance at Advisory Council meetings. Discussion followed and the general consensus was not to allow teleconferencing for meeting attendance. Supporting arguments included:

- Past experience of teleconferencing on other boards was not successful
- It could be allowed for extenuating circumstances on a case by case basis but not by policy
- Multiple call-ins could become cumbersome and ineffective
- Attendance in person is a natural filter.
- There is value in being in person, particularly for presentations and discussion

PRC Closing Remarks

Commissioner Martin: Due to a prior commitment, will not be able to attend the June 2 Budget Public Hearing.

Commissioner Arreaza: Very interested in the educational presentation on Department contracts.

Commissioner Guinness: Visiting the various parks in the North Region.

Commissioner Cox: Gave kudos to staff on budget process

Commissioner Bryant: North Park Tour set for May 14

Commissioner McMannis: Kudos to staff at McDowell Nature Center for programming

Commissioner Barnhart: Reminded of Hats off to Parks, Bark in the Park and the Highland Games at Rural Hill.

Commissioner Pruess: Reminded of the Cooperative Extension plant sale

Director Garges: Reminded of the 1st Ward Park opening and Earth Day at 1st Ward Park on April 23rd.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.